DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 395 667 PS 024 200

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TITLE Inclusion...Through Storytelling: Proposal for Interest Group for SECA Conference.
PUB DATE Mar 96
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Southern Early Childhood Association (47th, Little Rock, AR, March 11-16, 1996).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Childhood Needs; Classroom Environment; Conferences; Counseling Techniques; Curriculum Development; Disabilities; Early Childhood Education; Equal Education; *Inclusive Schools; Mainstreaming; Position Papers; Premature Infants; Program Proposals; *Regular and Special Education Relationship; *Special Education; *Story Telling; Teacher Education; *Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS Developmentally Appropriate Programs; Southern Early Childhood Association; *Special Needs Children

ABSTRACT

A proposed position statement for a Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA) conference session focusing on children with special needs in the regular educational program is presented in the document. The proposal highlights the importance of inclusion of those children in a regular educational program and the need for caregivers to be able to provide them with a developmentally appropriate environment. The proposed session aims to help child caregivers address the needs of those children in a child care program, public and private early childhood environments, Head Start settings, kindergartens or primary grades. Through storytelling, the session participants talk about learning activities that are child-initiated, child-directed, teacher supported, and consistent with a child's developmental age. Curriculum is illustrated through the eyes of characters in "The Balancing Girl," by Berniece Rabe, and "A Button in Her Ear," by Ada Litchfield, and through discussion on the response to individual children's needs. "Friends in the Park," by Connie White Pirner, will be used to generate talk about the need for ongoing professional development programs. Family involvement will also be brought out as a key factor to successful inclusion, as seen through "He's My Brother," by Joe Lasker, as will the need for continued research. The proposal concludes with a position statement on inclusion by the Louisiana Early Childhood Association (LAECA). (AA)

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# PROPOSAL FOR INTEREST GROUP FOR SECA CONFERENCE

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C. Inclusion.....Through Storytelling

D. content priority: LACUS has developed a position statement on Inclusion
We will discuss the needs of a child with special needs in regular educational programs through storytelling, fingerplays and songs.

E. Purpose: This session will focus on "Children with Special Needs" in regular educational program, e.g., child care programs, public and private early childhood environments, Head Starts, kindergartens or primary grades. Through storytelling, we will talk about learning activities being child-initiated, child-directed, teacher-supported, and consistent with a child's developmental age. Curriculum will be shown through the eyes of Margaret, "The Balancing Girl" in the story by Berniece Rabe and through "A Button in Her Ear," by Ada Litchfield. "Friends in the Park," by Rochelle Bunnett, will be used to demonstrate the need for ongoing professional development programs. Family involvement, as seen through "He's My Brother" by Joe Lasker, will also be brought out as a key factor to successful inclusion.

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**ABSTRACT**

# Inclusion...Through Storytelling

What !! That child is going to be in my class!!!??? What happens when a child with special needs enters your environment. Are you prepared? Are the children in your settings prepared? Will inclusion in your setting do more good than harm? We will venture into these questions and many more through a storytelling experience with inclusion. Basic principles and explanation of many disabilities as well as a question and answer time will be provided.

Until the early 1980's, babies born under about 2 pounds had little chance of survival. With the advent of newborn intensive care units many of these premature infants have survived, Even though they survived, serious health problems persist from birth. Most resulted because their bodies were simply too underdeveloped to cope with the world outside the womb. While the children's health ills in early life have been well documented, the latest study is showing the tiniest infants of the 80's have gone off to school with a host of mental and physical disabilities. The 90's are now showing increase of new treatments for premature babies. The effects upon our schools are yet to be seen. Accompanied with the enactment of Public Law 99-457 a major impact has been placed on our present education system Thus showing a great gap existing between what was presently excepted practices and what we must do now. No longer are the very small, medically fragile infants remaining at home. These very special children are receiving ancillary services in occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech therapy from birth. Part H of the 1986 amendments to Title I of the Individuals with Disabilities Act is a grant program within the federal government that focuses exclusively on the provision of early intervention services to children form birth to age 3 with disabilities and their families. Parents are becoming aware of their rights and making opportunities for their special children to enter day care centers and family day care homes. Now more than ever it is important for well trained early childhood personnel to know how to handle and work with these very special children in group situations. Now more than ever it is important for caregivers to be focused on the environment and to realize the need for developmental care over simply custodial care.

Infants with special needs learn and grow best when they get high quality care. Quality care is care that helps children develop both their minds and bodies in a safe and healthy place. Providing quality care is not an easy job. With the increase of "custodial care" that must take place for an infant with special needs it is easy to overlook the "developmental care" that must occur. Custodial care is the routine care that pays attention only to the baby's basic needs. For an infant with Special needs that may be: recording how many times you have changed him/her today, or preparing a special formal and recording the amount taken in, or for very small infants it may mean more feedings a day because the infant is not able to take in as much at one time. "Developmental care does all of those things as well as taking care of the baby's needs to be held, loved, and talked to.

Each child needs to be given things to look at and listen to; to play outside of the crib and be given help to do more things on his own. Babies are learning every minute of every day. That's why caregivers of special needs infants have to make everything they do count for developmental care. Ideas such as hanging a few interesting pictures in the diapering area on the wall where baby can turn his head to see. Or if there is a shelf overhead, taping one on the bottom side so that baby can see and touch them freely. Crawling on pictures is another great idea. Using contact paper to cover pictures face up on the floor and then letting babies crawl on the plastic and look at the pictures while the caregiver should talk about what she/he sees.

Self-esteem needs to be build in infants with special need form the very beginning of life. As soon as a infant is identified as having a disability it's important that you value and like them. Babies need to know that you really care about them.. They know this from

your tone of voice and gentle touch. They feel good when you look into their eyes as you talk to them and as you meet their needs rapidly. Studies have been done on babies to find out which babies cry more. Those who are allowed to cry or those whose cries are answered quickly. It turns out that babies who are answered quickly cry less than those who have to cry a long time before they get what they need. The quickly answered babies are happier because they have learned that adults will love, help, and care for them. They are less anxious and grow up to be happier and more independent. In some cases, babies have given up on crying and don't cry at all because they are rarely answered. These children usually grow up without being able to trust in others and have many problems throughout life.

Play is another area that must be an major part of an infant with special needs day. Play is basic to human development. It is an integral part of the intellectual, social, physical, and perceptual growth of a child. It has been said play is a child's work and lack of play experience can have adverse effects upon the development of a child. Continuous inability to engage in physical activity and gain mastery over his/her environment may cause a child to lose motivation and become passive. Infants learn primary through sensory and motor exploration. When growth in the sensory or motor areas are limited you may be creating a child that cannot be an active participant in play. Without the experience of hands-on exploration of his/her environment the chances of becoming a fully productive adult are lessened. I

Teaching play may help the child acquire basic skills and eventually enjoy various activities he/she otherwise may never acquire. In playing , the child takes the world and makes it into whatever he or she wants it to be. A box becomes a race car, a blanket becomes a

house, or the child becomes a fantasy figure or superhero. Piaget defines play as an activity done "for mere pleasure of mastering them and acquiring thereby a feeling of virtuosity or power. By teaching children with special needs to play beginning at "birth" we are putting power into their future.

In teaching play it is important to remember that all activities for children with special needs must be open ended, carefully planned by adults, however chosen by the child. The routine must be planned and child initiated activities while embedding the skills each child must acquire into routine activities.

As the child grows it is important for each caregiver to work towards a goal that will build a specific skill for that child. Each caregiver must know how to arrange the environment to provide a child with special needs the opportunity to work towards that goal. The child with special needs also needs to feel he is included or a part of a group. There are many simple ways in which to do this. Providing adaptive equipment for dolls in the housekeeping area. A doll with a hearing aid or glasses or a doll in a wheel chair can be a teaching aid without ever saying a word. Making sure adequate space is available so a child who uses a walker or wheel chair can access the same materials that every other child is able to access.

Adding books to your book center such as:

Friends in the Park by Rochelle Bunnett published by Checkerboard Press New York

Howie Helps Himself by Joan Fassler published by Albert Whitman and Company Morton Grove, Illinois

Even Little Kids Get Diabetes by Connie White Pirner also published by Alber Whitman and Company Morton Grove, Illinois

A Button In Her Ear by Ada B. Litchfield published by Alber Whitman and Company Morton Grove, Illinois

The Balancing Girl by Berniece Rabe published by E.P. Dutton New York

Animal Signs A first book of sign language by Debby Slier published by Checkerboard Press New York

He's My Brother by Joe Lasker published by Alber Whitman and company , Chicago

These are only a few really good literature suggestions that portray children with special needs in everyday life.

LAECA -formally LACUS has also issued a Position Statement concerning Inclusion

D. Outline.

## Inclusion

LACUS believes in and supports full; and successful inclusion of children with disabilities in regular education programs.

LACUS recognizes the unique nature of each child's abilities, needs and resources.

LACUS values the diversity of families and supports a family-guided process for determining services based on the needs and preferences of individual families and children

LACUS belives all children with disabilities have the right to participate in:

A) the most appropriate setting (e.g. , homes and families, play groups, child-care programs, Head Starts public and private early childhood environments)

B) environments with their typically developing peers.

LACUS supports the following in the implementation of inclusive practices:

*Developmentally appropriate practice.
Learning activities are child-initiated, child-directed , teacher supported and consistent with a child's developmental age.

* Curriculum is responsive to individual children's needs.

B) Play and other naturally occurring activities throughout the day

*These provide the appropriate context for teaching and therapy because young children learn best when activities are meaningful to them.

*Strategies such as incidental teaching, functional skills training, and intergrated therapy are essential.

C) Successful outcomes for children in inclusive environments

* More than mere placement of the child in an environment with typically developing peers is required.

* Each teacher, caregiver and therapist will need support personnel in order to maximize each child's potential and successfully meet the needs of typical and atypical students

D) Ongoing professional development program

*These programs can assist administrators and caregivers in developing skills and in working collaboratively within inclusive settings..

E) Family involvement.

*Families should be a part of the process for determining appropriate placements for their children

F) Family education and support

* Families should be offered opportunities to acquire relevant information concerning parenting skills, development of children, and advocacy for children.

G) Continued research

* Quality research contributes to knowledge about current, effective and innovative techniques.

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**LAECA** believes in and supports full and successful inclusion of children with disabilities in regular educational programs.

**LAECA** recognizes the unique nature of each child's abilities, needs and resources.

**LAECA** values the diversity of families and supports a family-guided process for determining services based on the needs and preferences of individual families and children.

**LAECA** believes all children with disabilities have the right to participate in:

(A) The most appropriate setting (e.g., homes and families, play groups, child-care programs, Head Start, public and private early childhood environments).

(B) Environments with their typically developing peers.

**LAECA** supports the following in the implementation of inclusive practices:

(A) **Developmentally appropriate practice.**

- Learning activities are child-initiated, child-directed, teacher supported, and consistent with a child's developmental age.
- Curriculum is responsive to individual children's needs.

(B) **Play and other naturally occurring activities throughout the day.**

- These provide the appropriate context for teaching and therapy because young children learn best when activities are meaningful to them.



- Strategies such as incidental teaching, functional skills training, and integrated therapy are essential.

(C) **Successful outcomes for children in inclusive environments.**

- More than mere placement of the child in an environment with typically developing peers is required.
- Each teacher, caregiver and therapist will need support personnel in order to maximize each child's potential and successfully meet the needs of typical and atypical students.

(D) **Ongoing professional development programs.**

- These programs can assist administrators and caregivers in developing skills and in working collaboratively within inclusive settings.

(E) **Family involvement**

- Families should be part of the process for determining appropriate placements for their children.
- Frequent opportunities to observe and determine the appropriateness of the placement are encouraged.

(F) **Family education and support.**

- Families should be offered opportunities to acquire relevant information concerning parenting skills, development of children, and advocacy for children.

(G) **Continued research.**

- Quality research contributes to knowledge about current, effective and innovative techniques.

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# POSITION STATEMENT

*on*

# INCLUSION

***Louisiana Early Childhood Association (LAECA)***

*(formerly)*
***Louisiana Association on Children Under Six***